DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 155 578 CG 012 699

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TITLE Pointers on Guidance and Counseling Programs.
PUB DATE 11 Mar 78
NOTE 9p.; Paper presented at the North Central Regional Conference of the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges (March 11, 1978, Detroit, Michigan)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Accountability; *Community Colleges; *Counseling Goals; Counseling Programs; Guidance Objectives; *Guidance Programs; *Innovation; *Program Effectiveness; State of the Art Reviews; Student Needs

ABSTRACT

This paper assumes five basic functions for the community college guidance and counseling program: (1) applicant consulting (interpreting test results, introducing career planning, aiding the student in course selection, and explaining curricular requirements); (2) student advisement (scheduling students, explaining Senior College requirements and appraising students of special supportive services); (3) group orientation (teaching study skills courses, providing occupational information, and orienting students to all aspects of college life); (4) student counseling (conducting interviews, making appropriate referrals, administering and interpreting tests, values clarification and health counseling; and (5) disseminating career information. It then analyzes three methods--innovation, relevancy, and accountability--which can be used to create a dynamic guidance department at the community college level. (Author)

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ED155578

"POINTERS ON GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING PROGRAMS"

Presented at

The Council on Black American Affairs

A Council of

The American Association of Community and Junior Colleges

The North Central Regional Conference

Detroit, Michigan

March 11, 1978

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NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

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INTRODUCTION

According to Raines (1967) Community College guidance and counseling programs should involve at least five basic functions. These include: (1) Applicant consulting (2) student advisement (3) group orientation (4) student counseling and (5) career information. The first area, consulting, refers to interpreting test results to applicants, introducing career planning, aiding the student in appropriate course selection, and explaining curricular requirements. In the second area, advisement, the counselor is engaged in scheduling students, explaining Senior College requirements and appraising students of special supportive services. Group orientation, the third component, would involve teaching study skills courses, providing occupational information, and a general orientation to all aspects of college life. A fourth basic function, student counseling, is perhaps the most commonly thought of counseling task. This responsibility relates to conducting interviews, making appropriate referrals, administering and interpreting tests, values clarification and health counseling. The last basic guidance and counseling task is that of disseminating career information.

The manner in which these components are planned and implemented will, obviously, influence the effectiveness of the department. The primary consideration is whether or not these rudiments are present. Once these basic functions are operational, one can then go about the business of employing techniques and strageties to adapt these services to meet special institutional needs.

POINTERS

Now that we have had an opportunity to view the basic aspects of guidance and counseling programs, we will consider some "pointers" or methods to provide the sustaining substance for a dynamic department. These pointers include (1) innovation, (2) relevancy, and (3) accountability.

INNOVATION

In most guidance and counseling programs there are certain activities that are or have been labled innovative. In arriving at this designation one, usually, finds it easier to develop new ideas if (1) one thinks in terms of problems to be resolved or (2) consideration is given to needs of one or more of your constituencies. At times the two areas may, of course, be one in the same because a problem to be resolved could very well involve a constituency need.

As one examines the innovative process, the question should be raised as to where in the total delivery system should change occur. It may involve the total intake procedure. Let's consider for a moment the perception a prospective client has of the mechanics associated with your counseling department such as the location, bulletin boards, location of receptionist and or secretary, manner in which he is permitted to see a counselor, i.e. by appointment or walk-in, hours that counseling is available including noon hour and between the end of day classes and beginning of evening classes, and availability of information. As you reflect upon the situation you may find that you have a better idea, an innovative method to enhance your visibility and intake procedure. If your counseling department does not provide continous service from morning until night, it might be of value to explore the possibility of providing it. In case you decide to experiment with the idea, do not neglect to document the results by keeping a tally of telephone calls, visits, or other events that take place to determine the usefulness of the service.

After reviewing the intake process, you may want to consider the range of counseling services available to the client once personal contact is made. Where can you be innovative to resolve a recurring problem or fulfill a need? Some possible areas of innovation maybe (1) Human potential groups (2) career planning seminars (3) mini-seminars (4) womens' groups (5) returning student groups (6) college orientation sessions (7) student retreats (8) student concerns survey (9) study skills groups and (10) transfer guides.

Finally, attention can be focused upon the student's departure from the institution. Is the counseling department involved when a student drops a course or withdrawls from the college. If so, are records kept of (1) the reasons students give for withdrawing (2) what their plans are while not attending the institution and (3) if they expect to return to your institution or some other in the future. This information can be valuable in (1) determining modifications to allay the drop-out rate and (2) understanding the reasons students leave the institutions. These suggestions are provided for illustrative purposes. Once each individual examines the total guidance and counseling delivery system in their respective institution in terms of the various components the framework for innovation will become clear.

RELEVANCY

Presumably, if an innovation is instilled into the counseling and guidance program it should be relevant to the needs of the departments. There is, however, a broader area of concern to which the term relevant applies. This area concerns the relationship of the counseling department to members of the college community other than students. How relevant, for example, is the counseling department in meeting the needs of instructional faculty? Instructors are often concerned about (1) a profile of entering students (2) the screening process, if any, of new students (3) how are students placed into certain classes or curricula (4) what instructional methods are most effective for the

type of students entering (5) attendance (6) achievement levels (7) learning (8) what happens to the students they have had who get jobs (9) how do their transfer students cope academically once they are in a four year institution and (10) how do the students who have transferred evaluate their community college preparation. Quite likely the counseling department could provide some input for instructional faculty, through workshops or in-service sessions, to aid in understanding and disseminating information regarding these area of concern.

Another facet of the issue with respect to relevancy involves community based constituencies, such as: clubs, organizations, agencies, churches, secondary schools, and other post-secondary trade vocational, or educational institutions. Since community college counselors are normally involved in one or more of the previously mentioned constituencies, their needs should be considered. Perhaps a speakers bureau would be of value for use by some of these constituencies. Certainly, visits to campus by secondary school counselors, career days, on campus, for area high school students, visits to campus by agencies, organizations, and four year admissions personnel would serve to enhance the vitality of a counseling and guidance program.

ACCOUNTABILITY

One final topic I would like to broach is concerned with the accountability of the counseling and guidance professional staff as well as the departmental program. "Pointers" in this area are normally provided by everyone on the entire staff. It seems as though various departments, divisions, administrators, student groups, and support staff give advice to counselors, and the guidance and counseling program, as to what their role within the college should be. Obviously, counselors cannot and should not be accountable to so many varied factions.

There are, however, some critical areas which require consideration. First of all, a guidance and counseling program should have a definition of its role. This should be developed in conjunction with the counseling staff, director, and dean of student services. This definition should include a statement of purpose which is ordinarily a component of the institutions' overall mission. Accompanying this purpose would be an enumeration of certain services, tasks, and responsibilities provided. Having an institutional role definition (1) specifies what you are supposed to do so that you are clear (2) indicates to other college areas that you know what your responsibilities are so that they are clear as well and (3) provides some critera to use as one accountability measure. After a role definition is developed, the department may certainly wish to consider other suggested services. It is imperative, however, that the department determine its' own basic functions, not someone else.

Other means of looking at accountability measures include in-service training and evaluation of services. The former can take the form of retreats to assess departmental as well as personal growth. It can be participating in workshops and seminar related to counseling innovations and techniques. One excellent method of updating knowledge is to invite other departmental representatives to staff meetings to find out what is going on in the college in terms of new program proposals, program eliminations, courses to be added or dropped, personnel changes, or admission requirements for special programs.

Evaluation of services is an important aspect of guidance and counseling programs. This procedure should occur regularly because the data that is provided could be invaluable in program planning. At times, one may indicate that it is difficult to evaluate effectiveness because the process is too complicated. A counselor may indicate that he/she "feels" as though a good job is being done.

This maybe the opinion, but the feedback received from the counselee could be contradictory. That response from the person counseled is valuable.

The previously mentioned "pointers" on guidance and counseling programs were intended to provide an operational overview of some practical aspects of the departments functioning. How worthwhile they are will, of course, be contingent upon the degree of innovation relevancy, and accountability already existing within each institution.

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